

Long Island Artist Ian James Roche Named Quarter Finalist in Johnny Depp's 2026 People's Artist Competition

COMMACK, NY, UNITED STATES, June 17, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Self-taught Long Island artist Ian James Roche, a longtime resident of Commack, Suffolk County, has been named a quarter finalist in the 2026 People's Artist Competition. The campaign is presented by Johnny Depp and powered by Colossal, the nation's leading professional fundraiser for purpose-driven online competitions, in support of the nonprofit Art of Elysium. Even more exciting, Roche is currently holding first place in his group, with public voting now open through July 9th.

The winner is awarded a \$25,000 prize, a featured appearance in Artforum Magazine, one of the most prestigious publications in the contemporary art world since 1962, and the honor of displaying their work at Art of Elysium's Salon in Los Angeles.

"There is a strange kind of magic in the way that artists see the world," said Johnny Depp, in a statement released by the People's Artist Competition. "Art doesn't confine itself to neat little boxes, and nor should the creator. Art is everywhere in it, always. This competition is about supporting that creative vision and talent."

The fundraising campaign is designed to give artists visibility while helping expand access to creativity for communities facing emotional and social challenges. Since 1997, Art of Elysium has empowered artists and communities through programs that bring creativity to individuals navigating illness, isolation, and emotional hardship, creating moments of connection by pairing



Ian James Roche, Commack, NY, artist and quarter finalist, currently holding first place in the 2026 People's Artist Competition presented by Johnny Depp.

volunteer artists with those in need.

"Being selected as a quarter finalist is very exciting," said Roche. "Art has been such a healing journey for the past 13 years, and to have people connect with the beauty of my work means everything to me."

Roche, who stepped fully into his creativity at the age of 35, has since become known for his extraordinarily large-format pastel paintings on sheetrock, a medium he pioneered after a transformative visit to Dia in Beacon, New York, in 2014.



Ian James Roche at a 2018 exhibition at Five Points Gallery Annex in Torrington, Connecticut, one of several shows that have brought his distinctive work to audiences across the Northeast.

What makes his approach truly distinctive is that he works entirely without preliminary sketches or models. Remarkably, he has never abandoned a single piece. Roche creates large-scale pieces driven purely by instinct, heart, and imagination, describing them as bold, visionary works that carry a profound spiritual charge, revealing the deeper dimensions of human experience.

“

I paint my heart out. Every piece I create comes from a place deep inside me. I just trust what comes and let the painting evolve into what it needs to be.”

Ian James Roche, Artist

"My artwork has become my teacher and has guided me through an evolutionary healing process to help me see the true beauty in life," said Roche. "I believe my work to be evidence of the evolution of the human spirit into beauty, and I am making it my mission to continue to evolve through my work and to share this beauty with the world."

Birth of a Superhero, Ian's debut piece, was completed in 2014 after a transformative visit to Dia, which launched a remarkable artistic journey. Inspired by the works of Sol LeWitt and Richard Serra, Roche reached for soft pastels, a medium that held deep personal meaning. His late father, who passed away when Ian was 11, had used the same medium while receiving art therapy in a rehab center. Acquiring a simple piece of sheetrock, he created something that would change the course of his life and allow him to express himself creatively, in a way that his father couldn't continue.

Working out of his studio in Commack, New York, Ian has exhibited and sold his creations throughout New York and Connecticut, with shows in 2024 and 2025. His work has been featured in Long Island publications, including a cover feature in Dan's Papers, one of the most

widely read publications on Long Island, cementing a growing following among collectors and art enthusiasts alike.

"It really warms my heart, having the support of the Long Island and New York communities and their belief in me as a person and an artist," says Roche. "Every vote brings me one step closer to sharing this work with the world on a much bigger stage."

Now the Long Island community has a golden opportunity to help put one of their own over the top. Public voting is open now, and every vote counts. [Vote for Ian here](#).

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[About Ian James Roche](#)

Self-taught artist Ian James Roche was born in New York City and fully stepped into his creativity at age 35. After a transformative visit to Dia in Beacon, New York, in 2014, Ian began creating large-format pastel paintings on sheetrock, a medium inspired by his late father's own pastel artwork. Each piece emerges purely from instinct without planning or preparation.

Ian creates powerful paintings that pulse with spiritual energy. He holds an Associate's in Culinary Arts from The New York Restaurant School and an Interdisciplinary B.S. from the New York Institute of Technology. He maintains a studio in Commack, New York, and his pieces have been exhibited regularly across the New York area, including shows in 2024 and 2025.

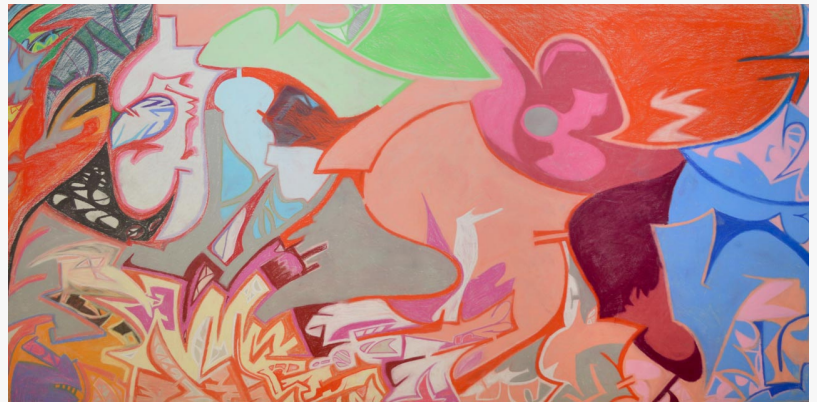
Ian's art has been featured in Beyond Words Magazine, Artist Talk Magazine, Art Seen Magazine, and Elevate Magazine, and he has served as cover artist for both Scene Life Magazine and Dan's Papers. His work is available at ianjamesroche.com.

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Birth of a Superhero, Ian James Roche's debut pastel on sheetrock, completed December 1, 2014, following a transformative visit to Dia in Beacon, New York. The piece that started it all.

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